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P O E M S

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.



POEMS

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

CHIEFLY THEATRICAL.



BY

WILLIAM THEW.



TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.



“ Nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice.”

SHAKESPEARE.



LONDON :

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Dedication.

TO

MRS. COUTTS.

London, Feb. 1, 1825.

MADAM,

In consideration of the high rank which some years ago you held in the Mimic World, and of the many amiable qualities which have distinguished you on the Great Stage of Life, I take the liberty of inscribing to you this Little Volume of Effusions, respectfully remaining,

MADAM,

Your most obedient,

Humble servant,

WILLIAM THEW.

870334

P R E F A C E.

THE author of the present work did not at first deem it essential to publish his life; but feeling that it is due to the cause, if not to himself, he has (with profound submission) intruded it on the candour of a generous and impartial public: and, under the assured conviction, that every liberal mind feels it an act of cowardice to censure those whose sole motive is to please, he trusts, that, if in the following pages he should have fallen into any inaccuracies (and no doubt there are many,) his readers will attribute them to his first essay in writing for the press. He is very ready to admit the mediocrity of his pen, and hopes the public will dismiss with candour the

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errors of a man, who, though no poet, is one, who being perfectly satisfied with the honesty of his intentions, will think for himself, and whose sole comfort is centered in the independent happiness of his own mind.

And here (but with the greatest deference to the judgment of others) he begs leave to introduce a few remarks on the criticisms, &c., in the following pages. First then—the author is very ready to admit the plainness and simplicity of his style: elegance, and those fine brilliant ideas, which abound in the works of a BYRON or a SCOTT, do not appear to him at all essential for this sort of writing: ease and perspicuity are the only requisites to describe the common transactions of life. The chief end of a critic is to persuade; consequently the beauty does not consist so much in the copiousness of his style, as in the originality and correctness

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of his thoughts. This is what the author conceives must have given Garrick the superiority over all his competitors in this sort of writing: his Prologues, Epilogues, &c., are exceedingly simple, and as Davies justly observes, "That whatever defects the critical eye may discover in reading his compositions, they were all amply supplied by the speaker. The archness of his look, the propriety of his action, and the general touch of humour and pleasantry, which accompanied every line he spoke, drew from the audience loud and involuntary mirth, with the greatest applause which had ever been known in a theatre." So that, in fact, every thing depends on the genius of the actor, who, by his consummate knowledge of the passions, will even make a speech, which is, perhaps, in itself of no importance, appear "of great pith and moment." But a 'Tragedian of this stamp only makes his appearance

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once in fifty years. To return to the subject.

What boots it for a man to pour out an empty pomp of words, which do not make the sense a jot more expressive? Whereas a style that is plain, generally (though not always) carries with it an air of truth that strikes the mind; besides having the advantage of being often better calculated to excite the feelings, which is the principal object, not only of acting but of oratory. In short, the author's chief aim has been to give his readers plain argument, or (in the words of a respectable writer) "plain truth in plain language."

The attempt at originality is in all pursuits laudable; for, in the words of an immortal bard, "Invention is the noble attribute of the mind." What then can prove a more manly independent

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spirit, than owing distinctions to our own exertions? 'Tis not in mortals to command success, but in every one's power to deserve it." And may not a man be allowed to write as a relaxation from other studies?

Upon the whole, I shall rest my argument on the following well known, just, and forcible remark :—

—————" Th' attempt and not the deed

" Is in our pow'r, and therefore who dares greatly,

" Does greatly!"

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LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.



L I F E
OF
THE AUTHOR.

OF what avail is a man's birth provided he have honorably passed his days in endeavouring to deserve well of his country? But as my life, perhaps, may not be found uninteresting, I shall, with all due submission, unfold a plain unvarnished tale.

I am the youngest of six children, and was born in Suffolk, on the sixth of November, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-four, at the noted place where the celebrated GARRICK first made his debüt. My poor mother died when I was a babe

in arms, and, in my puerile days, (with the exception of my beloved father, now no more), I was never treated with much kindness by any one. My great-grandfather and grandfather were clergymen, and my father a lawyer, who sent me at the early age of eight to the grammar-school in the before-mentioned town, under the tuition of a Mr. King, who thought me a dull boy. I had an impediment in my speech, which totally prevented my being understood ; so much so, that the ushers, in order that they might know whether or not I had learnt my lessons, used to make me write them down from memory. Yet there seems to be something in the dispensation of Divine Providence ; for, notwithstanding this natural defect, I anticipated with delight the period which would give scope to my talent in recitation.

My father, thinking I had made little progress in classical learning, placed me

under the direction of the Reverend Dr. Grimwood, who, it is but justice to add, paid due attention to my studies. But whether he deemed my impediment insurmountable, or that I occupied too much of his time, he wrote to my father, indicating his fears that I would never overcome my misfortune; which caused great uneasiness to my relations, my father having designed me for the law. For some years, I was under this gentleman, and in consequence of the defect in my speech, was always placed at the bottom of my class. But this unfortunate circumstance proved a still greater calamity: for, whenever my master missed a fruit from his orchard, my companions (to screen themselves) would invariably ascribe the theft to me, well knowing, as I could not speak plain, I was less able to vindicate myself: and here, perhaps, it may not be amiss to introduce the following little anecdote.

I need scarcely say that schoolboys are often fond of talking about their masters, and of stating their *wishes* as *facts*. Accordingly, one of them happened to say that we should soon see our master's name in the Gazette (a London newspaper where bankrupts are inserted.) This reached the Doctor's ears, and, as usual, the calumny was laid upon me, who, though innocent, was doomed next morning to a flogging. I thought this very hard, and vowed vengeance against my master. I therefore set about writing a satire, which, I thought, would not only annoy him, but, what was still better, that he would be so taken up in endeavouring to find out the boy who wrote it, that he would forget my flogging altogether.

The old gentleman had a very fierce bulldog, named *Hennel*, which having once bit him, he caused to be tied up at a consider-

able distance from the house. I, in the evening, instead of learning my task, wrote the following lines, which I sily put next morning on his desk, before he entered the school :

If you wish to see dog Hennel,
You must go unto his kennel ;
If you wish to see an ass,
You must get your looking-glass.

These lines, though simple in themselves, had the desired effect. He was so severely stung, that, in a great rage, he instantly summoned all the head scholars to his desk. Not being able to find out the offender, he confined them to the school-room for a week, and gave each seventy lines of Virgil to get by heart. I, being considered a little boy, was not even questioned about it ; yet, little as I was, I had art enough to disguise my hand-writing.

On my return home for the holidays, my father, who happened to see these lines, showed them to my godfather, (the late Mr. Crickitt, one of the members of Parliament for Ipswich,) who one day asked me in a jocular manner, if I thought I could write a song on his election. I replied, I would endeavour ; but in the meantime, if he pleased, I would give him a riddle to solve ; at which he seemed highly diverted. When he came in the afternoon to dine with my father, I put the following into his hand :

There is a diminutive thing to be found,
That's chirping about during all the year round ;
Though you don't in the least partake of its nature,
Still you much, in one thing, resemble this creature.

ANSWER—" A Cricket."

With the hope that these puerile effusions may be entertaining to the chief

number of my readers, I shall introduce a few more little anecdotes of the same nature.

During the Christmas vacations, I was often in the habit of visiting a Mr. Thompson, a clergyman, who, though possessed of considerable property, was considered by his parishioners very parsimonious; yet it is but justice to add, he left, at his death, a large legacy to charity.

This gentleman would frequently ask me odd sorts of questions; and one day after dinner, he said, in a humorous way, that he thought I intended to write his epitaph; and as he could not tell what might be said of him when he was dead, he begged me to do it as soon as possible. Soon after I gave him these lines:

Here lieth Parson Thompson—who, to save,
Hath will'd no tombstone shou'd be o'er his grave;

Altho' a clergyman, yet (strange to say)
The dence a farthing would he give away.
Most of the clergy, tho' possess'd of sense,
Have scarce so much as ev'n a competence;
But he who lies in this unhallow'd pit,
Was one possess'd of money, not of wit.

The old gentleman at first laughed heartily ; but the satire was said to have severely stung him. Indeed, he asked me if I understood the true meaning of the word " Unhallowed." To get out of the scrape I pretended to think that it meant *sacred*.

One morning I went to pay a relation a visit, when a certain nobleman happened to call; and as it was raining very hard, the coachman and footman went down to the kitchen. When I was going away, as I came down stairs I heard a great noise ; and what should it be but his lordship's servants quarrelling. Their language was so amusing that I stood on the stairs to listen ; and overheard the footman say to

the coachman,—“ Now, I’ll tell you what it is, Jack : you have long been playing your pranks o’er me, but I’ll stand no more on’t : I can tell by a little what a good deal means.”

The oddity of this saying so amused me that I returned back to the drawing-room, and related the circumstance. It happened a certain poetess was present, who, being somewhat satirical, said—“ Aye, make something out of that if you can.” I replied I would endeavour, and show it to her the next morning. “ Oh no,” says she, “ if you wait till to-morrow, you’ll have time to think what to write.” So, after a pause, I gave her the following :

Collegians could not tell, that I have seen,
What, by a little, a good deal can mean :
But here’s a footmán, scarcely out of teens,
Knows, by a little, what a good deal means.

My father was in the habit, when he had a party, of sending for me into the parlour to see and converse with the gentlemen. One day, some of them said they would buy me a fine poney, if I would write something satirical on the fair sex. I gave them the following :

That in the Scriptures you are all remiss
Is clear, or you wou'd not have ask'd me this ;
And I may add, altho' you're grown up people,
A church not one knows scarcely from the steeple.
What you can't tell, a very youngster can,
That God made woman from the rib of man.
I must not then, for the Almighty's sake,
Talk against those whom he thought fit to make.
You'll gibe me now—but I don't mind your rod ;
Shall I, for your amusement, offend God ?

I spent a holiday with a rich lady, who was going to be married to a gentleman very poor in comparison to herself. She smilingly said, if I would write something

about her admirer, she would give me half-a-crown. I accordingly wrote as follows :

The reason, Ma'am, he offers marriage,
Is, to ride in your fine carriage ;
And there's another reason too—
He likes your money more than you.

The lady gave me five shillings, and told me not to repeat the lines to my papa.

A Doctor Gee, who lived near my father, was considered a most eccentric character. Among his oddities, he had his coffin and grave-stone made during one of my Christmas vacations. I used often to walk in his garden, and happening to go into one of the summer-houses, I espied up in a corner the said grave-stone, with the following inscription on it :

“ Here lie the remains of the late Dr. Gee.”

Now as he had complained to my father

that I picked the unripe fruit off his trees, I thought this a good opportunity to be even with him : so I added to the above line,

Hold ! hold ! quoth the devil, he now lies with me.

My father was in the habit, during the Midsummer and Christmas vacations, of giving me severe lectures about the slow progress I made in learning. He insisted on my paying the utmost attention to my Greek and Latin, when I returned to school, as he intended to make me a lawyer. Soon after, he asked me how I liked the law ? I candidly replied, not at all ; upon which he became somewhat angry, observing, that the assertion was ridiculous, without giving some reason. The next morning I gave him the following :

I don't like the law, and I hope that in this
You will not consider my reason amiss ;

At school to play marbles to me is a treat,
And yet when I play I am reckon'd a cheat ;
For being the son of a lawyer, they say
That's cause enough to debar me from play.
If, therefore, I now, Sir, am so much the dread,
When I'm really one what will not be said ?

I now (to use a school phrase) was getting a *biggish boy* ; and as my unfortunate impediment caused me to be the laughing-stock of the scholars, I generally avoided the juvenile sports of my companions and sought the most retired part of the playground. My own natural inclination now led me to the perusal of the authors, ancient and modern, particularly Shakspeare.

Having completed my scholastic studies and nearly reached my eighteenth year, my father one morning called me into his study and communicated to me his intention of sending me into the wide world to provide for myself. He again asked if I had still any objection to the profession of

the law. I regretted, I assured him, that my inclination should lead me so strongly against his will; but I thought that the stage would better suit my turn of mind. This put him into a great passion; and having expostulated with me very warmly on the subject, declared I should not already play the young man, and wished to know what reasons I had for such a life. He also gave it as his opinion that I should never make a fortune or figure on the stage, as my impediment was at once a complete bar to it. To all this I listened with no little attention; but taking the advantage of a pause which ensued, I said that the love of lucre appeared to me quite a secondary consideration—that I thought the question in life ought to be, not whether a man was possessed of more money than another, but whether he had more mind than another man—that if the celebrated Demosthenes overcame his impediment, why might not I? Then to support my argument I quoted

the following passage—"Are not all men of the same species? what can make a difference between one man and another but the endowments of the mind?" All this I urged with no little warmth—so much so, that he seemed greatly moved, and desired me to leave the room.

Shortly after, my father proposed sending me a voyage to the West Indies, with a view, no doubt, of diverting my mind from a theatrical life. This I was not at all averse to; my thoughts being somewhat bent upon seeing the world, as it would afford me an opportunity of observing the manners and dispositions of people in foreign parts, which, I thought, would greatly facilitate my study of Shakspeare.

Having now visited most of the Islands, I turned my thoughts towards my native land. Shortly after, I had the unhappiness to lose my father; who, though the greater

part of his life he kept his coach with a suitable equipage, and was worth thirty-five thousand pounds in specie (twenty one of which was bequeathed him by his grandfather) left but a little behind him, so many and unforeseen are the vicissitudes of fortune. When this little was divided among six children, a very small portion of course fell to my share : therewith, however, I was content. Being immoveable in my resolution to conquer my impediment, I accordingly communicated my intention to my friends ; but they unanimously declared it to be no less than a frantic undertaking. I remained about ten months, till I had made myself acquainted with some of the best of Shakspeare's speeches. One day being in a melancholy mood (for I am by nature of a sedate turn of mind, and delight in solitude and tears) I began to reflect seriously on my condition ; for I had not only the impediment to encounter, but I thought that I might perhaps have fallen into the error

(too frequent with the young) of being what is commonly called *stage-struck*, without having a single qualification to render the attempt successful, and which, in the end, might consequently prove my ruin. Thus having seriously turned the matter over in my mind, I resolved upon having the opinion of some one well skilled in theatrical affairs, and accordingly set off for Sheffield in Yorkshire, where the well-known Mr. Hough (late tutor to the young Roscius) then resided. My impediment at this time was so great that I could scarcely make him acquainted with the purport of my visit; at which, (as my readers may easily imagine) he appeared not a little surprised: particularly when he understood that I came a distance of one hundred and sixty one miles for the sole purpose of having his opinion of my abilities as an actor. Here I must not omit mentioning the kind manner in which he received me; and, after the usual forms of

introduction, he appointed that I should meet him the next morning, at the town theatre. He then heard me recite (as well as my impediment would permit) some passages from the "Merchant of Venice"; but declined giving a decided answer as to my abilities. I remained at Sheffield about a week, and being on the eve of departure, he at once told me that the defect in my speech was so great he thought I should never be able to overcome it, and advised me to think of some other line of life. This was certainly candid, but, as I remarked, it was no answer to my question, which was simply this—that supposing I did surmount the impediment, whether he thought I had sufficient talent to become a first-rate tragedian? he replied, that, in the event of my being so fortunate, he saw no reason why I should not. This was indeed highly gratifying: but I was not a man to be led away by flattery—no—still apprehensive that he might have over-rated my abilities,

I set off for Liverpool to have the opinion of Mr. Knight also—the then proprietor and manager of the theatre in that town. Here I was also received in the most friendly manner ; and one day, after dinner, having recited some speeches from “ Richard the Third,” he candidly told me that it was a great pity I had an impediment, for, if it had not been for this unfortunate circumstance, I might have become an ornament to the stage.

Now, to introduce to my readers, especially in a work of my own, the relation of facts like these, would, under almost any other circumstances than the present, be highly reprehensible ; but such is their peculiarity, that it will, I am confident, be, by every lover of truth, deemed perfectly justified.

I also trust that my readers will now acquit me of having proceeded too hastily ;

seeing I had taken the opinion of two excellent judges; who, though they deemed it an impossibility that I should be able to overcome the impediment in my speech, so as to become an actor, still admitted that nature had been very bountiful to me, particularly in the knowledge of the passions.

I now returned to London, where I remained for a short time and then removed to Portsmouth, where I took up my abode in an obscure part of the town. My library consisted of a few choice books, principally Shakspeare, and, at this time, I was a complete hermit. Here it may not be amiss to mention that the defect in my speech was now so great, that in endeavouring to speak (particularly some words that began with a T) I would hold my breath so long that my stomach was in a complete ferment; and I was of course obliged to wait for a more favourable opportunity before I attempted to speak again. I had now been

labouring (according to my feeble endeavours) for upwards of two years, and had, as well as the impediment would allow me, repeated aloud from memory the character of Cato thirteen hundred and twenty-seven times ; when my strength at last failed me, or, what I deemed still worse, my unfortunate impediment had but little abated, and, for the first time, I began to despair of success.

One evening, as I was in a very pensive mood, reflecting on the calamity with which it had pleased nature to afflict me, my tears began to flow, and I called upon God (without whose aid nothing can be accomplished) to grant me his powerful protection, and crown my labours with success ! I arose next morning and commenced my day's work, if possible, with redoubled ardour. It was my usual custom to go through a character twice every morning ; and when I was studying

HAMLET (a part which, above all others, I wished to excel in) I thought I would go through it a third time ; but before I had finished the second act, I was seized with a sensation in my head, as if my brain was turning : the book dropped from my hand, and rushing towards the bed, I immediately threw myself on it. A profound sleep came over me, and on waking I was quite unnerved ; my limbs shook to a terrible degree, and I was not myself for some days after. It is impossible that I can ever forget the sensation I felt, when the book fell from my hand.

It was at this place (Portsmouth) where I adopted the plan of the celebrated DEMOSTHENES. In the night I often rose from my bed and took a solitary walk to the sea-shore, where I repeated my childhood sports ; and while the waves were in the act of bursting, instantly recited some passage from SHAKSPEARE. Thus, I

had an opportunity of knowing the extent of my voice, as I always endeavoured to make myself heard above the waves ; I also recited with two pebbles underneath each side my tongue. Indeed there seems to be some truth in the adage that “ Custom is a second nature ;” for when I put away the pebbles, I, at first, could not speak so well without them : however (to my unspeakable joy) I soon began to recite without the least impediment. I now returned to my friends, and having assembled them, I said, in a merry mood, “ Come, now you shall see the benefit I have derived from my frantic undertaking, as you were pleased to term it.” I now commenced Richard’s first soliloquy, but had not got half through it, before they shed tears and left the room.

My readers must now be informed that I had as yet only a theoretical knowledge of the stage, and as I was desirous of

knowing what effect my acting would have upon an audience, I went down to some of the country theatres, where I used to perform for my own amusement, under a fictitious name. Shylock, in the "Merchant of Venice," was the first character I ever played, and this was at Buxton in Derbyshire.

The ardency with which I now pursued my studies quite overpowered my constitution, and made such a visible alteration in my health, that, being considered in a decline, I was ordered by my physician a voyage to Spain. I readily complied with his advice, to which I ascribed my convalescence. Here a circumstance occurred which will, perhaps, astonish the reader: I absolutely laid a wager of ONE HUNDRED GUINEAS, that I would surpass the great Mr. JOHN KEMBLE, in the character of RICHARD THE THIRD. Now that a plain, humble man, scarcely out of his

teens (for I was not more than twenty-two years old) should dispute the palm with so celebrated a tragedian, who had trod the boards near forty years, and amassed as many thousands of pounds—nay, who had received princely honours—was thought no doubt, by many, consummate presumption. But a man's being thought so, is no proof that he is so:—indeed it would ill become me to state the result of this event ---let my actions speak for me---whatever they say, must be believed.

Again I returned to my native land ; but conceiving I had not yet completed my knowledge of Shakspeare, I retired to Kensington. Here, in the day, I always got by heart, and in the evening (just before the gates were closed) I sallied forth to the gardens (as the silence and solitude of this place very much favoured my meditations) and there remained till about ten

o'clock at night, when I would commence reciting. I used to take great delight in speaking the first part of one of RICHARD'S soliloquies---viz.

“ 'Tis now the dead of night, and half the world
Is in a lonely solemn darkness hung ;
Yet I, (so coy a dame is sleep to me)
With all the weary courtship of
My care tir'd thoughts, can't win her to my bed ;
Tho' even the stars do wink as 'twere with over-
watching.

I'll forth and walk awhile---the air's refreshing,
And the ripe harvest of the new-mown hay
Gives it a sweet and wholesome odour---
How awful is this gloom !”

Here it should be observed, that at this time it was the very height of summer, “ and the ripe harvest of the new-mown hay”---the solemnity and serenity of the night---the stars winking, &c., were so applicable to the subject, that I actually

used to fancy myself King Richard in reality. Indeed I was so led away by the force of feeling, that I positively would say to myself, "Am I Richard or am I not?" When I was tired I used to lie down in the summer-house and sleep till morning; but this was a mere bagatelle; for the eagerness with which I pursued the study of nature inspired me with courage to face every obstacle. Lest any of my readers may suppose that I was one of those fortunate youths who never knew the want of money, I can assure them, that, as my beloved and venerable parent left me only a trifle, I have frequently debarred myself of many comforts, in order to enable me to purchase books and all the appendages necessary for my undertaking.

It was about this time I got acquainted with one of the Committee of Drury-Lane

Theatre, who said it was his wish that the late Lord Byron should hear me recite. This gave rise to my introduction to this divine man of genius. Now I do not mention this circumstance from ostentation, but because it seems due to the cause, as must be evident to every man of common sense. Indeed, I conceive that a man, who writes his life, has a just right to record fairly and candidly every circumstance (although it should tend to be in his own praise ;) which, in fact, is nothing more than a man's speaking in his own defence in a court of justice. In my own opinion, the case has some similitude ; for as I expect to be summoned at some future period before a tribunal of critics, I certainly ought to say something in defence of my present pursuits. Under this impression, I beg to state, that I related to his Lordship all the various circumstances of my youth ; and having assured

him that it was my intention to dispute the palm, at some fit opportunity, with the greatest tragedian of the day, previous to which I should publish an impartial review of my life, he kindly granted me permission to dedicate it to him---but, alas ! “ Heaven has called its own away !” It was chiefly this circumstance, together with the opinions of Messrs. Hough and Knight, that induced me to think somewhat favourably of my humble endeavours in the tragic art.

Poetry, I am well aware, consists in imagination and versification ; and, in the words of a celebrated author, should be embellished with brilliant ideas and descriptions. I boast of none of those requisites. I merely tell a plain tale, couched in plain language, and this publication is not to display my talents as a poet, but to introduce myself to the notice of the public as a tragedian.

It was my intention some years ago to have disputed the palm in London with the first tragedian of the day; but as I then suffered considerably from ill health, I deemed it prudent to rest from my labours, and used, by way of recreation, to paint, write little pieces of poetry, and sing. The paintings I considered such daubs, that I gave them to little children to play with; much of the poetry I committed to the flames, and as for my singing, I would willingly forget it.

In 1815, I entered the matrimonial state, and was so happy as to celebrate the tenth anniversary of my wedding day in the following lines :---

'Tis twice five years since Hymen's bands
United us together;
At whose great shrine we join'd our hands
To love and never sever.

Unlike the noble bard who says *

 This day hath done its worst,
A brighter theme now swells my lays,
 Each year being like the first.

Thanks be to Heaven ! our nuptial day
 Hath proved to us so true,
'That nought but death's dissolving sway
 Can separate us two.

What did I say ? Alas, my brain !
 Must I then be undone ?
No, no ; e'en death can't loose the chain
 That links us into one.

For e'en, when the last trump shall sound---
 When angels crowd the skies---
Our hearts with one accord shall bound,
 And both together rise.

* Alluding to the late Lord Byron, who was married the 2d of January, 1815; and, if we may believe the "Literary Gazette," his Lordship on the 2d of January, 1821, sent Lady B. the annexed Epigram :—

 " This day of all hath surely done
 Its worst to me and you ;
 'Tis now six years since we were one,
 And five since we were two."

Thus lockt in hearts, we still shall be
United as in one ;
And thus to hear great God's decree
Shall stand before his throne !

In 1822 I wrote the following Lament
on the death of my eldest child, who left
this world at the age of six years :—

This delicate child, who was nurtur'd with care,
Did like a bright angel appear ;
For all that was heavenly, charming, and fair,
Was center'd in this little dear !

I hail'd every morning with rapturous joy,
And, from the first hour of her birth,
Indulg'd in the hope that she'd live to enjoy
The greatest of blessings on earth.

But, Oh ! 'twas the will of th' Almighty on high
T' afflict her with sickness so sore
That now the sad period was fast drawing nigh,
When I should behold her no more.

With how much solicitude I watch'd her frame,
To catch her departing sweet breath :
A lingering victim she four days became,
Ere seiz'd by the cold hand of death !

Oh, may her dear soul in beatitude rest,
May angels her slumbers still guard !
May she in the heavenly mansions be blest ;
Be bliss without end her reward !

Ah ! when I recal th' happy days that are fled,
How great is my anguish and grief !
The tear of affection, which falls o'er the dead,
Is the balm that affords me relief.

Thou pride of my soul ! thou delight of my heart,
Though gone to a happier bourne,
Still, love, thou art dearer because we're apart,
Because from my arms thou art torn !

The tears that now fall down my pale worn cheeks
Are proofs of a sorrow sincere ;
'Tis the language of nature---sweet nature that speaks !
What evidence can be more clear ?

Alas ! thou art deaf to thy mother's fond cries,
A stranger thou art to her woe---
Thou seest not the tears that start from her eyes---
The tears that incessantly flow !

Her cheeks, which once vied with the bloom of the rose,
Are now deeply sunk in her head !
And, oh ! the pale visage which true sorrow shows
Has taken its station instead !

Tho' three tedious sad years have now glided by,
Since gone from this earthly domain,
So fresh thy dear features are still in my eye
Methinks I could trace every vein---

Methinks that I still hear thy fond prattling tongue
Now lisping out accents most sweet!
Oh, thy delicate form, on which I once hung,
With rapture I'd now fly to greet.

Tho' cold be the lip that so often I've kiss'd,
The remembrance thereof is so dear,
That 'tis like the torn bark that is lost in the mist,
And then hails the bright atmosphere.

Oh, farewell to the world, a long lasting adieu
To all that is charming and gay;
For pleasure, unless, my dear love, shared with you,
Resembles the false hopes of day!

Oh, grant, thou Almighty disposer of men,
Whose will it hath been we should part,
That I may, in heaven, my child see again,
For this is the wish of my heart!

I shall now close this little work by observing, that great will be my gratification

if my biographical sketch and observations on the stage meet with public attention. That I am ambitious of excelling to the very pinnacle of fame, my actions will bear record: and notwithstanding the sneers of weak-hearted enemies (for what man is without them?) I will be bold to aver that I feel such a conscientious pride in having overcome the impediment in my speech, with which it pleased heaven to afflict me, in spite of protracted ill health, occasioned by incessant toil and study, that I am anxious that the public should witness my success. Now, that the prince of poetry* is no more, I stand alone in the world. But what of that? I had not a single friend to uphold me in my endeavours to correct my speech: on the contrary, my actions were by many turned into ridicule, (among whom were some of my own relations); but the day of trial may at length arrive, and I shall

* The late LORD BYRON.

willingly dispute the palm with the greatest tragedian of the day, for

ONE HUNDRED SOVEREIGNS,

in the following characters :—

HAMLET,	CORIOLANUS,
KING LEAR,	KING JOHN,
MACBETH,	ROLLA,
RICHARD III.	OCTAVIAN,
SHYLOCK,	ZANGA, and
HOTSPUR,	CATO.

It is also my wish that the matter should be decided by seven of the most competent judges that can be found in London *. This I conceive to be the fairest way for

* If it were left to myself (and the following persons would be kind enough to be the umpires) I would choose G. Colman, D. E. Morris, S. J. Arnold, W. Hazlitt, L. Hunt, W. H. W. Betty, and C. Mathews, Esqs.

my opponents as well as for myself; as party-work could be then of no avail.

I scorn to tread the same paths that have been traversed by others; and am well aware that my manner of representing these characters, is essentially different from any actors now on the stage. I do not pretend to say, that I have more judgment than others; but I am firmly of opinion, that the Supreme Being has gifted me with that quickness of feeling, which alone can constitute the real greatness of a Tragedian. Now supposing this to be the case (for until the umpires give their verdict it can only be a supposition on my part) how much have I to encounter, and how many enemies must I necessarily have! But I trust every impartial man will admit that I meet my adversarie manfully, and under many disadvantages. Davies tells us, that an actor, who, in the first display of his talent, undertakes a

principal character, has generally amongst other difficulties, the prejudice of the audience to struggle with, in favour of an established performer.

Actors always choose their best character to make their appearance in, before a London audience. I, on the contrary, have some idea of coming out in Cato, which I conceive to be my worst. But I feel more than ordinary pleasure in playing this character, it being, after long perseverance, the first part I recited, from memory, without the least hesitation in my speech. I am well aware that my person is not so well adapted, as I could wish, to a Roman character ; but I will endeavour to make amends for this, and do my utmost to rivet the attention on sentiments which I will make the audience feel. I consider (if I may be allowed to judge) Hamlet, Richard, Lear, Macbeth, and Shylock, to be my best performances. I am a great

admirer of energy of passion ; and it appears to me, that my humble abilities are more calculated to the various passions of the human heart, and to the rapid transitions of them, than to dignity of character or weight of sentiment.

An actor, on his first appearance in London, always looks for that indulgence which is given to every stage adventurer. But as I come forward to dispute the palm with the first Tragedian of the day, my situation is widely different ; and I consider it would be acting with injustice towards my adversaries, were I to expect favour from the public. No---alone I have held my way, alone I'll stand the contest. I only ask for that, which all candidates have an equal right to expect,---namely, fair-play.

Here, perhaps, it will be as well to state that as mere money has ever been with

me through life a secondary consideration, I have given instructions to my bookseller, to dispose of this work for no more than what will cover the expences of the publication ; and, moreover, in the event of my gaining the wager, let the money be appropriated to the benefit of some charitable institution ; for, if the umpires say I have surpassed the greatest actor of the day, my ambition is satisfied.

POEMS.

POEMS.

THE FOLLOWING THEATRICAL CRITICISMS ON

KEAN, THE LATE KEMBLE AND COOKE, MRS. SIDDONS,
AND MISS O'NEIL,

Were written about ten years ago.

I'LL first commence with the great-little KEAN*,
Who, by the bye, I frequently have seen ;
Of his consummate pow'rs I'd often heard,
And of his RICHARD too—I mean THE THIRD.
Accordingly, I went into the pit,
The usual place where serious critics sit.
The scene now chang'd and Glos'ter then appear'd,
Before he spoke what great applause I heard !

* Mr. Kean, although a great actor, is, in figure, somewhat short.

But in adherence to the proper plan *,
 I didn't applaud until I heard the man.
 His entrance, I confess, was very fine ;
 But in the speech, methinks, he did not shine.
 He was by far too pensive—too sedate †,
 O'erwhelm'd with some impending heavy fate.
 Why seem to have a discontented mind ?
 For victory should be to joy inclin'd—

* An audience generally applaud a new actor the instant he enters; but critics seldom do, lest he should prove to have no abilities, for it does not follow because a man has a fine tragic countenance, figure, &c., that he must be a great performer. *The Mind is the Man.*

† Of all Richard's soliloquies, I think this excites most interest, and gives greater scope to the actor to display his talent; but, however much I admire Mr. Kean in other passages of the play, I was here highly disappointed. Richard has gain'd the battle, and carries every thing before him, as the very text tells us:—

“ Now is the winter of our discontent
 Made glorious summer by the sun of York ;
 And all the clouds that lour'd upon our house
 In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.”

Meaning that he comes from adversity into prosperity. Now the question is, how would a man feel upon such an occasion? Would he be serious or exult in the event? Mr. Kean is so sedate that he by no means exhibits the picture of a man crowned with success. Surely if this part of the soliloquy was delivered with a secret joy, or crafty smile depicted on the countenance, it would be more appropriate to the character. But in justice to Mr. Kean I must observe, that he does not fail from want of judgment, but because nature has not given him the artifice of Richard.

I mean an inward joy—a crafty smile,
 That stamps King Richard in his secret guile.
 Doesn't the soliloquy itself express
 “A glorious summer”—that is—great success * !
 But candidly I must acknowledge, Kean
 Rises superior in the courtship scene †
 With Lady Ann ; and when that he prevails,
 With admirable looks the tyrant rails ‡ .
 This actor, in the tent scene, does no more
 Than BOOTH, and other Richards, did before.

* Many actors as well as amateurs, endeavour, as near as possible, to copy the style of Kean and Kemble, little thinking how much they expose themselves to the lash of the critic's pen. Any one, who aspires to the top of the profession, will never succeed if he thus degrade himself with the epithet of a copyist. LLOYD's lines in “The Actor” are well worth the Amateur's attention, particularly the following:—

But let the generous actor still forbear
 To copy features with a mimic's care !
 'Tis a poor skill which every fool can reach,
 A vile stage custom “honoured in the breach.”
 Worse as more close the disingenuous art,
 But shows the wanton looseness of the heart.”

† Mr. Kean far surpassed my expectation in the courtship scene : his manner of delivering

“Fair creature, he that killed thy husband
 Did it to help thee to a ——— better husband,”

Was excellent.

‡ Was ever woman in such humour woo'd !
 Was ever woman in such humour won !

The evident transition from dismay
 To desperation, very few portray :
 “ Here will I pitch my tent :” this said, he cries
 “ But where to-morrow ?” sudden fears arise :
 And then he ought to add, “ No matter where,”
 With all the rapid wildness of despair *.

* “ Here will I pitch my tent—but where to-morrow?
 No matter where—— ”

Having calmly uttered “ Here will I pitch my tent,” the actor should, as if seized by a sudden sting of conscience, come hastily forward with convulsive agitation to exclaim—“ but where to-morrow?” On his terrors gradually subsiding—“ No matter where,” should be said with frantic rapidity.

The finest part in Richard is certainly when he starts out of his dream. But in this, as in many other passages, there is a particular line in which the actor should direct the whole of his judgment. Mr. Kemble was a bright example of this in “CORIOLANUS,” when he says to AUFIDIUS, “ Alone I did it, boy.” In delivering these five simple words, he got four rounds of applause. Mr. Kean, in exclaiming

“ Give me a horse ! bind up my wounds !
 Have mercy, heaven !”

Is thus far correct ; but when he adds,

“ Ha ! soft ! ’twas but a dream !”

Which is the grand point to hit off, I think him totally wrong : he merely says it with little or no feeling, and gets scarcely any applause. Now my conception is quite different : for after Richard has exclaimed, “ Give me a horse ! bind up my wounds ! Have mercy, heaven !” he should look around him for a moment,

Kean's preparations for the dreadful fight
 The most fastidious critic must delight :
 Behold him, when wrapt up in thought profound,
 Drawing a model of it on the ground :
 Behold him also in the battle scene ;
 His equal here, perhaps, has never been :

(which is very natural in a man's waking from a terrific dream,) and in low accents say, with sudden delight, or rather satisfaction,

“ Ha ! soft, 'twas but a dream ! ”

Of course the next sentence,

“ But then so terrible it shakes my soul ! ”

Would have double the effect. Surely a man like Richard, dreaming he is wounded---his horse slain---the battle going against him, &c., would feel an inward joy at finding it to be but a dream. I wish not to be misunderstood ; I mean an inward joy ; for were a man to laugh right out, it would be ridiculous in the extreme. It is, however, almost impossible for a person to form an idea of the effect some passages have, when spoken in a whisper, unless they hear them on the stage. This is the reason why some theatres would not suit a great tragedian, being so badly constructed, that a whisper is not *heard*. LLOYD gives two excellent lines on this head, viz. :

“ More nature oft, and finer strokes are shown,
 In the low whisper than tempestuous tone.”

This inward joy, however, at finding his wound, &c., visionary, must be only momentary. “ Shadows ” strike such terrors in Richard's soul, that every noise or entrance creates alarm : and it is not till he can order “ Conscience avaunt ” that Richard is himself again.”

Th' effect produced by a stage-trick is grand,
For when disarm'd, he pushes with—his hand *

* As simple as this may seem, Mr. Kean has the honour of being the first actor who ever did it, and, by this admirable point, evinced great depth of genius. It is not always that an audience see the beauties of a great genius ; and had it not been for the critics, probably this beautiful point would have been half lost.

Davies, in his *Life of Garrick*, tells us, when that great archetype of actors first made his debut in London, his manner was so different from every other actor, that the people did not know whether to hiss or applaud ; and it was not until he came to the fourth act, when he exclaims “Off with his head ! So much for Buckingham,” they saw his wonderful merit. By-the-bye, Mr. Kean does not deliver this passage at all well. When Catesby brings the joyful tidings to Richard, that the Duke of Buckingham is taken, Richard’s countenance should be lighted up, when exclaiming “Off with his head !” and the utmost contempt shown in delivering, “So much for Buckingham.” Besides, he gives it in the same tone of voice, which, in my opinion, is totally wrong. Nature instructs us to vary, not only the looks and gestures, but also the tones ; for as LLOYD observes :—

“ ’Tis not enough the voice be sound and clear,
’Tis modulation that must charm the ear.”

Nevertheless, it is but justice to add, that Mr. Kean, with all his glaring faults, has doubtless many original beauties.

But Garrick appears to have been of all others the best suited for Richard. As some of my readers may not be aware of his wonderful powers, I shall, in the words of Davies, give a concise account of him. As nature unlocked her exhaustless stores to Shakspeare’s eye, giving him the faculty of discovering them, so she distinguished Garrick as her favourite child, and gave him the various faculty of personifying them. Hence it was that he burst upon the world in a full meridian of blaze, untutored and unrivalled. In the course of a few nights he mounted the most

It was original—sweet nature's plan—
And in the actor we beheld—the man.
In ecstasy I rose up from my seat,
Talent, so new and wonderful, to greet ;
While prostrate Richard lay and gasp'd for breath
Till he was seiz'd by the cold hand of death.
Thus I've essay'd, as a true critic ought,
To point out ev'ry beauty—every fault;

brilliant pinnacle of the temple of fame ; he excelled the most excellent in that art ; he surpassed all that ever went before him ; and he gave an example to posterity, which they will never be able to imitate. He was in figure low. His voice was harmonious, and could vibrate through all the modulations of sound—could thunder in passion, tremble in fear, dissolve into the softness of love, or melt into every mood of pity and distress. These were powers with which he charmed an astonished age, and with these powers he had all nature at his command.

“ He could without the least preparation, transform himself into any character, tragic or comic ; and seize instantaneously upon any passion of the human mind. He could make a sudden transition from violent rage, and even madness, to the extremes of levity and humour ; and go through the whole circle of theatric evolution with the most surprising velocity. He moved with dignity, spoke with dignity, acted with dignity. Our ancestors, who saw him, tells us wonders of this great actor. He had in his possession every key of the soul. He transported his hearers where he pleased ; he was the master of the passions, and tuned them to his will ; he waked them, swelled them, soothed them ; he melted them into softness or roused them into rage. If he were angry, so were you ; if he were distressed, so were you ; if he were terrified, so were you ; if he were merry, so were you ; if he were mad, so were you. He was an enchanter, and led you where he pleased.

For criticism, to meet attention, must
Be truly fair, ingenuous, and just :
Indeed the name of Critic is disgraced,
If that he flatter or condemn in haste :
'Twould be injustice to the public cause,
To say Kean always merits our applause *.

“There is a most extraordinary circumstance related of this wonderful genius. When in France, he was asked by some French gentlemen to show his wonderful talent ; and as the greater part of them were but little acquainted with the English language, he was induced to relate a certain fact, and afterwards to exhibit it by action, which happened in England, and of which he had been an eye-witness. He was acquainted, he said, with a very worthy man, who lived in Lemon-Street, Goodman’s-Fields. This friend had an only daughter two years old : he stood at his dining-room window, fondling the child, and dandling it in his arms, when it was his misfortune to drop the infant into a flagged area, and killed it on the spot. What followed, he said, was a language which every body understood, for it was the language of nature. He immediately threw himself into the attitude in which the father appeared at the time the child fell from his arms. The influence which the representation of the father’s agony produced on the company, and exhibited by this darling son of nature in the silent but expressive language of unutterable sorrow, is easier to be imagined than expressed : let it suffice to say, that the greatest astonishment was succeeded by abundance of tears.”

Such was David Garrick—and it would be equally as ridiculous to compare Mr. Kean to such an actor as to place myself on an equality with Shakspeare as a poet.

* How is it possible for Mr. Kean, who has a bad voice, scarcely any dignity, in figure rather short, &c. to play all characters well? I am far from depreciating his merits, and, in justice to this great

Now **KEMBLE** claims attention—let us scan
 The merits and demerits of this man.
 In person tall—with an expressive face—
 With dignity, and with appropriate grace !
 How strange a man with requisites like these,
 Cou'd e'er his auditory fail to please !
 But 'tis not always *Figure* will succeed,
 Or a *fine face* will bear away the mead*.
 Where **Kemble** most display'd the tragic art,
 Was when he acted the proud **Roman's** part :
 In this, I shall not hesitate to say,
 He far surpass'd all actors of his day.
 His **Roman** hero is without a flaw,
 The best performance that I ever saw.
 He, in "**CORIOLANUS**," is so fine,
 That he was made by nature for this line.

actor, notwithstanding these imperfections, acknowledge he is the best tragedian now on the stage.

What Lord Chesterfield says in one of his letters to his son, may be, with great propriety, applied to this excellent tragedian; namely,—“That it is those who have the best sense always speak the best, though they may happen not to have the best voices. They will speak plainly, distinctly, and with a proper emphasis, be their voices ever so bad.”

* The following severe, though just criticism, appeared a few years back on a certain actor:—“As far as outward appearances go, he was all that could be desired; but we wish the thing had not been made to speak.”

'Tis said that the great Kean attempted this ;
 If so, I'm sure his acting was amiss *.
 How strange that a performer, in his way,
 Cou'd e'er "CORIOLANUS" think to play !
 Compare them both, and it must be confess'd
 That both of different talents are possess'd :
 Yes—different talents—yet it must be seen
 That KEMBLE was superior far to KEAN †.

* "CORIOLANUS" is so little adapted to Mr. Kean's style of acting, that he never could have played it from choice ; but the managers no doubt introduced him in the part, well knowing that the novelty of the thing would attract.

I have heard it frequently observed that Mr. Kean cannot perform this character, because he is not tall enough ; this is truly ridiculous ; for as LLOYD justly remarks :---

" The feeling sense all other wants supplies ;
 I rate no actor's merit from his size ;
 Superior height requires superior grace,
 And what's a giant with a vacant face ?"

The true reason of Mr. Kean's failure in this part, is, because he cannot move with dignity, nor give force to weight of sentiment ; consequently he is not calculated to personate the Roman.

† The reason that I give the palm to Mr. Kemble, is, because his PENRUDDOCK, CORIOLANUS, and CATO, are *finished* performances. Mr. Kean (and I believe the greater part of the critics) will agree with me) has not one. It is only in *certain* parts that this excellent tragedian displays his talents, for, in *others*, he equally disappoints—for instance, in the " Merchant of Venice," when *Shylock* says, " Let him look to his bond," his look and action are uncommonly fine ; but in the subsequent passages,

The paramount, indeed, was the late COOKE;

'Twas he that cou'd portray King Richard's look *.

when he should assume the vehement tones of the Jew, and depict the passion of anger, he entirely fails; not from want of judgment, but because Nature (without which precepts and art can do nothing) has not given him a thorough knowledge of the human heart. In *Richard* and *Shylock* he certainly has the advantage of all his brother actors; but nevertheless, they are by no means finished pieces of acting. In fine, take Mr. Kemble, on a whole, and he was certainly a better tragedian.

The late Dr. Goldsmith said of Garrick:—

“ On the stage he was natural, simple, poetic, affecting,

“ It was only that when he was off, he was acting.”

These lines may be applied in certain characters to Mrs. Siddons and the late Messrs. Kemble and Cooke; but in a very slight degree to Mr. Kean, who does not appear to be a profound investigator of nature.

* The expression of Richard's countenance (generally speaking) should exhibit craftiness. GARRICK and COOKE were the only actors as yet who possessed this qualification, without which no man can play Richard to perfection. Although I was much pleased with Mr. KEAN in the courtship scene (as before mentioned) yet he entirely wants Richard's artifice. The artifice in particular is what gave Garrick the superiority over all his competitors: besides which, (as the late Mrs. INCHBALD justly observed) he had the first abilities as a mimic; and Richard is a mass of mimicry except in his ambition and cruelty. KEAN and KEMBLE have neither of these qualifications: COOKE had the artifice without the mimicry: GARRICK had both.

I do not mean to desery the brilliancy of many parts of KEAN's Richard:---that he is a very fine performer, all who see him must acknowledge; but it is a duty every author owes to the public to point

He, with abilities, as yet unknown,
 The celebrated KEMBLE soon outshone *.
 He so surprised that he loud plaudits drew,
 His style of acting was so very new.
 There was no little contest who shou'd win,
 But COOKE at last forced KEMBLE to give in †:

out (in the best manner he is able) the defects, as well as excellencies, of an actor. And here perhaps it is as well to mention, that he does not appear to me to have in some parts sufficient action. A late celebrated French tragedian very pertinently observed, that "Rules may teach a man not to lift his hands above his head, but if Passion carries them, it is well done.—Passion knows more than art."

* I mean in certain characters, such as Richard, Shylock, Iago, &c. KEMBLE was certainly an excellent scholar, and in that had the advantage of Cooke: but (in the words of an author)" what Nature gave the latter was more than a balance for what learning had given the former. It is greatly to the advantage of an actor if he has received a classical education; and much, no doubt, may be attained by intense application: but no one can do justice to the animated language of the Passions, who is not highly gifted in the tragic art. It is nature that contributes most to the powers, not only of acting but of speaking. The language of passion can only be taught by nature: and as CICERO, the father of eloquence, very justly observes, "Such is the effect of a feeling manner of speaking, that it is often of more force than the merits of the case itself."

† When COOKE first made his appearance in London as *Richard*, KEMBLE had hitherto sustained the part with unbounded applause; but COOKE's fame soon spread both far and wide, which caused (as is always the case) a jealousy between the two houses (Drury-Lane and Covent-Garden;) so much so, that, it is said, "Richard the Third" was played at both theatres for thirty-five successive nights.

Altho' the latter was acknowledg'd fine,
 Yet Cooke was deem'd superior in that line.
 Another 'vantage had he, we must own;
 In Comedy, as well, he also shone:
 He in *Sir Pertinax* * so great appear'd,
 That with incessant plaudits he was cheer'd:
 His *booing* †, when a great man was in sight,
 Was well described, and fail'd not to delight:
 Not only claps of hands were heard, but, true,
 The ladies with their fans applauded too:
 This token of approval is so rare,
 That I was much astonish'd, I declare.
 In short, his Scotchman was without a flaw,
 The finest *Pertinax* I ever saw!

The pride was Mrs. SIDDONS of our age!
 She moved triumphant on the British stage.
 A charming actress Miss O'NEIL was too;
 In justice, we must give her-all her due.
 Her acting never fail'd to reach the heart,
 Which is a great point in the Tragic art:

* A Scotch character in the comedy of "The Man of the World."

† The Scotch manner of pronouncing the word *bowing*.

She also acted with consummate grace,
 And only lack'd a more expressive face *.
 To see defects in Tragedy we need
 A sharp and penetrating eye indeed.
 Let us reflect a moment, and we'll find
 The face to be the index of the mind † ;
 This granted, then, in Tragedy I am
 Loth to bestow on Miss O'Neil the palm ;
 For Siddons's distress, rage, joy, disdain,
 Are what the muse to paint would strive in vain.
 'Twas in the countenance she shew'd her skill,
 And could express the passions at her will :
Lady Macbeth (her best part, it is said)
 Diffused throughout the theatre great dread ‡ :

* I do not literally mean that Miss O'NEIL has no expression at all ; but in comparison to that great archetype of actresses, Mrs. SIDDONS.

† Vultus est index animi.

‡ I am told that Mrs. Siddons has often been heard to say, that in personating this character, she has felt the greatest agitation of mind. This is the true spirit of acting. Her delivery of the following passage, when she seizes the instruments of death from the irresolute *Macbeth*---

“ Infirm of purpose—give me the daggers,”

Is inimitable ; her look and action are so truly terrific, that they will never be obliterated from my memory. And again—

And anger well depicted on the stage,
Shou'd put the very audience in a rage.
And, in like manner, sorrow, it appears,
Should not alarm, but melt us into tears * :
According to this plan, it must be seen
That Mrs. SIDDONS was the Tragic Queen.

“ I have given suck, and know
“ How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me :
“ I wou'd, while it was smiling in my face,
“ Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
“ And dashed the brains out, had I but so sworn
“ As you have done to this.”

* To draw tears from an audience is the most difficult part of acting—it cannot be learnt :---it is the peculiar gift of nature.

FOOTE, who was GARRICK'S mortal enemy, one day told him that he thought actors were too well paid :---“ By ——” says Garrick, somewhat in a rage—“ Not at all—a monarch may make a captain; but the Monarch's master alone”—meaning the Almighty—“ can make the truly great tragedian.”

OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
PROFESSION OF AN ACTOR.

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HAVING closed my theatrical criticisms in verse, I shall now beg leave to offer some observations in prose on the profession of an actor. Mr. Hazlitt, (who is certainly an excellent critic) observes in his work on the English stage, “That players are not so respectable a profession as they might be, because their profession is not respected as it ought to be.” Now I do not acquiesce in this, for the profession hath doubtless its due share of respect. But supposing, for argument’s sake, that it has

not, it can only be attributed to the actors themselves, many of whom do not seem to be aware, that falling into low company dissipates their faculties, and (what is almost of as much importance) lessens their consequence with the public. This remark, of course, does not extend to the KEMBLE family, and many others, who are worthy, respectable characters. But players (generally speaking) are very extravagant and intemperate: indeed the very nature of the profession has a tendency to dissipation. These remarks, no doubt, will be deemed by the Theatrical World as uncalled for; they may be thought to have too much poignancy, but I conceive it is a duty I owe to myself as well as the public, to write impartially. It ought also to be remembered that I reap no pecuniary advantage from my opinion; (I mention this because it is a well-known fact that critics are often paid to speak well of performances); and that my per-

sonal acquaintance with any of the actors is so slight, that whatever I advance does not arise from private pique of any kind, but from a sincere wish of promoting the public good. Every one must know, of all the occupations, that of a dramatic critic is the most unpleasant and thankless, it being impossible to please all.

The French and English pay the greatest respect to players of superior rank. MICHAEL BARON was the great actor of France, the brother Roscius of GARRICK. DAVIES tells us that all the historians of the French stage, speak of BARON as a prodigy of the theatre. The richest and noblest epithets in their language are selected by them to express the beauties of his action and the power of his elocution. He was caressed and almost idolized by the French. He was the great favorite of the nobility, and conversed with them freely and familiarly. He had a large pension

bestowed on him by the King, and presents from the princes of the blood : yet notwithstanding all this, his companions sometimes made him feel the inferiority of his situation.

There is an anecdote related of Moliere, who was esteemed an excellent actor in Comedy, and was, at the same time, a very great author. He was indeed, as BOILEAU and RACINE told LOUIS XIV., the glory and boast of his reign. LOUIS knew MOLIERE'S worth, and rewarded his merit. He conversed often with him, and even sometimes gave him a hint for a character, particularly in the *Facheux*. The great Prince of *Condé* admired MOLIERE, and many of the Noblesse were his patrons. In vain did LOUIS endeavour to raise the humane and generous MOLIERE above the prejudices which followed his occupation of actor. To honor him as highly as his condition would permit, he appointed him one of the gentlemen of his Bed-chamber ;

but this post, which was designed to place him above reproach, exposed him to a very gross affront ; for when, according to the custom of France, he went to assist at the making up of the King's bed, his partner refused to join in office with him, on account of his being a player. It is true, the King resented this gentleman's insolence, but that could not wipe away MOLIERE'S disgrace.

POPE goes further ; for, in his preface to Shakspeare, he tells us that in those days the condition of the players was then so mean that they were conducted by the butler into the buttery ; so that it appears there has existed almost from time immemorial a certain prejudice against the occupation of actor. And indeed, to speak the truth, I have of late years imbibed the same ; so much so, that when I used to perform in the country for amusement, the managers always wanted to make me some pecuniary recompense ; but although an ad-

dition to my own little income would have been of great service, yet my pride would never suffer me to take a single shilling for my humble efforts, thinking if I did, I should be an actor. But my friends latterly seem determined that I should become a player, whether so inclined or not.

Acting is undoubtedly the most bewitching of all arts, and highly calculated to lead the young and unwary astray, who are often smitten or stage-struck without having even a single qualification; consequently, in the end, it frequently proves their ruin.

We often in life hear it said, “What a heavenly singer such a one is! No wonder he is invited to all the great public dinners.” Now the question is, Why is he? Is it for his superior manners or his singing? If for the latter, he is only made use of; for, as Lord Chesterfield observed, “Whoever is

admitted or sought for in company upon any other account than that of his manners, is never thoroughly respected there :” or whoever is had (as it is called) for the sake of any one thing singly, is singly that thing, and will never be considered in any other light. These are stubborn facts, and facts which are incontrovertible. Now, unfortunately for the actor, the very nature of his profession often subjects him to this ; and I have frequently known many of the first-rate actors and singers invited to a nobleman’s party on this account—“ We will have such a one,” they say, “ for he recites well. We will invite such a one to our concert, for he (or she) sings divinely.” These are mortifying preferences, which will never (if found out) be forgiven by a thorough well-bred person, because it excludes all ideas of respect, besides hurting that secret pride which nature has implanted in the soul of man.

It may perhaps be thought somewhat strange that I should speak, in many parts, so slightly of an art which I have expended so much time in endeavouring to attain perfection in. But why should it? No circumstance should hinder an author from giving an impartial opinion, even though he himself feel the lash. And indeed such is my nature, that, if it were to save me from starvation, I do not think I could conceal what is uppermost in my mind. I cannot stop the career of my satire out of respect for any one: it as readily strikes at a great personage as the meanest man upon earth. And I do most strenuously maintain that the very nature of the profession hath a tendency to dissipation, and strongly advise all those parents, who have any regard for their daughters' happiness, to deter them from such a pursuit, ever remembering, that

Where one Tragedian gains the golden prize,
Thousands there are who sink no more to rise.

I could expatiate upon this subject, but what I have advanced will, I trust, be quite sufficient to show that the stage (particularly to a thorough well-bred lady) is by no means an object of ambition, unless the person can arrive at the very acmé of perfection, which is utterly impossible without being endowed with a knowledge of the passions.

Having said thus much on the actor's profession, I shall, as well as I am able, take the other side of the question.

First, then—It is but justice to observe, that any one is respectable if he conduct himself so, let his profession be what it may ; for it is the rectitude of a man's conduct which distinguishes him from his fellow-creatures. Some men there are who fawn and scrape, and (as it is called) dance attendance on their superiors merely for what they can get : and these vile syco-

phants may succeed with those who have risen by the same means. But this artifice is ever the mark of a narrow mind, which a real respectable man will never condescend to—his very soul revolts at the idea. He will always bear in remembrance that most excellent French proverb—*Bonne renommée vaut mieux que ceinture dorée*---“A good name is better than a girdle of gold.” It is indeed preferable to wealth or splendor.

Secondly.—Of all professions the players of this country can boast of the greatest honor, namely, That SHAKSPEARE, the pride and glory of England, was an actor. The merits of this great Poet have been so ably discussed, that it would be superfluous for me to expatiate on the subject; particularly as I am very certain that all I could advance would fall infinitely short of the merits of this illustrious bard.

Thirdly.—There is also a circumstance,

which perhaps the greater part of mankind are totally ignorant of. I have perused the lives of the most learned Fathers of the Church and other eminent characters, and find that the two most humane and generous persons were actors—namely, ROSCIUS of ancient Rome, and GARRICK. Be this recorded to the eternal honor of the actor's profession!

Davies tells us, the very high encomiums bestowed on ROSCIUS, exalt him in the opinion of all men. His integrity, modesty, liberality, and benignity, were as great essentials in his character, as his skill in playing. And such was the generosity of his temper, that for the last ten years of his life, he performed without any fee or reward. CICERO, speaking of ROSCIUS, says, 'That while his wonderful skill places him at the head of his profession, his moderation and virtue render him worthy of a place in the senate*.' The Greeks also did

* Ciceronis oratio pro Q. Roscio Comædo.

not think acting a disqualification for any office of the state, civil or military.

In speaking of GARRICK, Dr. JOHNSON (who was not much in the habit of extolling others) says, "That to those who knew the sums he constantly gave away, it would appear that his sole end of acquiring wealth was for the benefit of others; and that he gave more money than any man in London." He had almoners, to whom he gave sums of money to distribute to such objects as they approved. But DAVIES records two very remarkable deeds of this actor's generosity, which in honor to his memory, ought here to be mentioned. "A gentleman of fashion, and a man universally beloved and esteemed, borrowed five hundred pounds of Mr. GARRICK, for which he gave him his note of hand. By some vicissitude of fortune, the affairs of this gentleman were greatly distressed. His friends and relations, who loved him,

were determined to free him from uneasiness, by satisfying his creditors. A day of meeting for that purpose was appointed, on which they were to be very cheerful. Mr. GARRICK heard of it, and instead of taking the advantage of the information to put in his claim, he enclosed the five hundred pound note in a letter, in which he told the gentleman, that he had been informed that a jovial meeting was to take place between him and his friends, and that it was to be a bonfire day. He therefore desired that he would consign the note to the flames."

The other anecdote is still more to Mr. Garrick's honour. He was very intimate with an eminent surgeon, who died several years since—a very amiable man, who often dined and supped with Mr. and Mrs. GARRICK. One day after dinner the gentleman declared that his affairs were in such a situation that, without the

assistance of a friend, who would lend him a thousand pounds, he should be at a loss what to do. “A thousand pounds!” said Mr. Garrick; “That is a devilish large sum! Well now, pray what security can you give for that money?” Upon my word,” replied the surgeon, “no other than my own.” “Here’s a pretty fellow!” said ROSCIUS, turning to Mrs. GARRICK, “he wants a thousand pounds upon his personal security! Well, come—I’ll tell you one thing for your comfort. I know a man that at my desire, will lend you a thousand pounds.” He immediately drew upon his banker for that sum, and gave the draft to his friend. Mr. GARRICK never asked for, or received a shilling of it.

Hence it must appear, that the profession of an actor may be rendered highly respectable, though it is too often sullied by intemperance and vice. Tragedy, when well represented, is doubtless a most ad-

mirable imitation of nature*. Nay, QUINTILIAN and CICERO go further, and maintain, that the knowledge of the passions is the greatest gift heaven can bestow. The Spaniards have a good proverb on this head ; *Ciencia es locura se buen senso no la cura*, “ Science or learning is of little use, if it be not under the direction of good sense.”

I have now only to add, that though it be highly desirable to be admired as an eminent Tragedian, yet surely it must be admitted that it redounds much more to a man's honour, if, as a private gentleman, he should be so fortunate in any of the arts, to bear away the palm from those who make them their profession. The value of

* St. Paul, in his epistles, has given quotations from a Greek tragedy ; particularly that excellent sentiment, “ Evil communications corrupt good manners :” yet the ignorant *Cantwells* of the day have the impudence to say, that plays are profane performances.

a taste for the arts, is much greater than is commonly perceived ; for, in the words of an eminent author—" in solitude the elegant entertainment they afford, is an effectual security against the intrusion of idleness. In society, they provide innumerable topics of conversation which afford ample scope for the display of judgment and taste. By furnishing the mind with elevated conceptions and refined sentiments, they render it superior to gross and vulgar pleasures. In fine, while science enriches the understanding, the study of polite literature cultivates the taste and improves the heart ; and both unite to form the accomplished and happy man."

MISCELLANEOUS PIECES.

MISCELLANEOUS PIECES.

AN EXTEMPORARY EFFUSION,

WRITTEN A FEW YEARS AGO AT THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE, IN
CONSEQUENCE OF THE AUTHOR'S HAVING BEEN
ACCUSED OF PLAGIARY.

I WRITE these few verses to let my friends see
Th' unmerited censure you've pass'd upon me.
How hard would the task be to please all the town ;
While one sets me up, t'other pushes me down.
That line which appears to annoy you so much,
I wish had been written in German or Dutch.
The prologue, you say, you have read with attention,
And think that one line is not my invention !
If such be the case, Sir, you certainly ought
To've pointed the line out and thus prov'd the fault.
You say there is one, or there's two at the most—
But not to my knowledge, I safely can boast.

How happy am I we've a SHERIDAN here *
Whose name every friend to the stage must revere ;
Who surely can judge of a tragical part,
And value the force of each tone, look and start.
Altho' you've attempted my merit to raise †,
I care not a straw for your censure or praise ;
And if I judge rightly, I'm sure there are few
Who could be so blind as to take me for you.



A

PROLOGUE

ON THE AUTHOR'S HAVING BEEN SOLICITED TO PLAY

" RICHARD THE THIRD."

WITH doubt, with fear, and apprehension bound,
Once more I trespass upon Tragic ground.
How wou'd the crabbed critic vent his spite
Did he but see the Tragic Muse to night ;

* The late Thomas Sheridan, Esq., who was considered an excellent judge of tragedy.

† After the critic had found out that his accusation was groundless, he began praising the author.

A surly cur who spares nor friend nor foe ;
To him unknown what actors undergo !
However great an actor's powers may be
T' effect the higher walks of Tragedy,
Stage, dresses, scenery must all agree.
Doubly severe then is the task to-night,
Never were actors placed in such a plight :
No gaudy scenes adorn our minor stage ;
No splendid robes your fancies to engage.
The house so ill design'd—indeed to me
'Tis doubtful whether you will hear or see
Those finer strokes where genius points the way,
And nature darts her own refulgent ray—
Where look and action mark the Tragic mien,
And music's charms add vigour to the scene.

Thus then forlorn, like culprits here we stand,
To wait the judgment from the critic's hand.
Or like the bark which scudding homeward bound,
Crowding all sail to reach her destin'd ground :
Sudden, alas ! dark clouds obscure the sky,
And dreadful thunder echoes from on high ;
Such vivid light illumines the darken'd main,
Strikes to the mast and rends the pine in twain :
At length the storm subsides, the raging deep
Is hush'd, as 'twere, in everlasting sleep.

The joy which now pervades each anxious heart
This night we hope to realize in part :
Zealous to prove immortal Shakspeare's worth,
We venture here like blossoms in their birth ;
And trusting you'll your wonted succour lend,
We'll do our best, and to your judgment bend.
Cheer'd with the fire that warms a Briton's veins,
We ask no more to recompense our pains :
Rejoiced if we shou'd please in Shakspeare's cause,
To see our efforts crown'd with your applause.



THE

D R E A M.

ONE night I had a dream, and from afar
Methought I saw a rich resplendent car,
Drawn by two fiery steeds, who, in my sleep,
Foam'd like the angry surges of the deep :
In it sat JUSTICE, like the rainbow dress'd
A placid smile his countenance possess'd.

The scene now changed—I heard a trumpet sound,
And peals that shook the very earth around :

The shrine of **FAME** now open'd to my sight,
Which seem'd but one continued blaze of light.
Violent clamours then assail'd my ears :
And, lo ! the **GOD OF JUSTICE** now appears.
The car drew nigh, and vaulting from his seat,
The gazing throng fell prostrate at his feet.

Another scene ! it was a sudden change ;
And as magnificent as it was strange.
I saw him on a throne—in the left hand
A wreath of laurel—in the right a wand :
His awful looks bespoke him more than man,
And to the list'ning throng he thus began.
“ Those who are Candidates for **Tragic fame**,
Dra wnear, and now assert your mighty claim.
Behold ! this wreath of laurel is design'd
For him who bears the greatest **Tragic mind**.”
Forthwith a man, whose looks and figure prov'd
That in the histrionic line he mov'd,
Bursts from th' assembly, anxious to lay claim
To that which would immortalize his name.
The part in which he fancied that he shone
Was fam'd **KING LEAR**, deserted by his own !
Alas ! poor man ! he could not move with grace ;
And when in grief—how vacant was his face !
He stamp'd and roar'd, as others did before,
Because he thought a madman needs must roar.

JUSTICE at length—whose eyes betoken'd rage,—
Address'd this mighty giant of the stage :
“ Forbear, rash youth, and hear my just decree :
A Tragic actor ne'er attempt to be :
Thinkst thou a handsome look—a form that's fine,
Are all that's wanted in the Tragic line ?
Believe it not—for, 'tis a certain fact,
If thou've no feeling, thou canst never act.
Dost thou not know the secret of the art
Is to draw tears from the most harden'd heart ?
To paint the passions, and the diff'rence show
'Tween love and hatred—between joy and woe—
To knit the brow when anger intervenes—
To look with kindness when compassion reigns ?
Thy vacant face by Nature's not design'd
To represent the feelings of the mind—
Love, transport, madness, anger, scorn, despair,
And all the passions should be painted there.
Mark DAVID GARRICK—did he not appear
The real Hamlet, Richard, and King Lear ?
He had such power o'er the human heart
That he made all the audience feel the part :
He lack'd thy figure—yet this little man
Attended faithfully to Nature's plan.
Where one Tragedian gains the golden prize,
Thousands there are who sink no more to rise.

No earthly pow'r can with effect impart
The god-like knowledge of the scenic art :
The feeling sense from higher pow'rs must come,
Without which aid no actor is " at home."



POOR JESSY.

A TALE.

In a lone vale there liv'd retir'd
A happy smiling pair;
And all the country round admir'd
Their decent, modest air.

Contented in their humble sphere,
They passed their youthful days;
And knew not what it was to fear,
Not knowing sinners' ways.

A lovely girl—an only child—
Was the first pledge of love;
Fair as the bloom of May, and mild
As the soft cooing dove.

Her parents now had nought to moan,
So good a child was she ;
For like the morning star she shone,
Clad in simplicity.

A straw-roof'd cot—twas all they had—
Encircled by a ditch :
And tho' they were but homely clad,
They envied not the rich.

Content sat smiling at the door ;
Within too virtue reign'd ;
No stranger came in vain t' implore,
For all a welcome gain'd.

Soon as the lark the sky ascends,
He, with a ready zeal,
Goes to the plough ; while she attends
With glee, the spinning wheel.

Young Jessy too—who knew no harm—
A kind good natured thing—
The milk now fetches from the farm,
And water from the spring.

She then a nice, but frugal fare,
For her dear sire prepares ;
For unto her's consign'd the care
Of all the house affairs.

Then going to her mother dear,
 She doth a kiss beguile ;
Her father too she meets with cheer,
 And welcomes with a smile.

If ever bliss was found on earth,
 They now were surely blest—
Blest above those who prize high birth,
 Or are in finery drest !

'Twas thus they liv'd in harmless glee,
 Void of domestic strife ;
And hoped their JESSY soon to see
 Made happy for her life.

This lovely girl had hitherto
 The paths of virtue trod ;
And had, to all apparent view,
 Sought refuge in her God.

Thus shielded by the potent arm
 Of an Almighty power,
Nought surely now on earth could harm
 So flourishing a flower.

But ah ! Melpomene's too frail
 To paint the bitter woe,
Which this fair lily of the vale
 Was doom'd to undergo.

Lur'd by a villain from her home,
This damsel once so fair,
Eventually was left to roam *
The victim of despair !

Lost to all feeling, he, with scorn
Now triumph'd o'er her pain ;
And joy'd to see that bosom torn
Whereon he oft had lain.

How faithless and how vile is man †,
Who many vows will make ;
But when successful in his plan,
Those many vows will break !

“ Good God !” she cried, “ how oft he swore
Me only he esteem'd ;
And when a darling babe I bore,
How very glad he seem'd !

* It is no unusual thing for men (calling themselves *gentlemen*) to entice young girls from their homes, and then leave them friendless wanderers on the world's wide stage. Such characters are ten thousand times worse than highway robbers ; for no one who possesses a spark of manly feeling could desert the object of his misguided passion.

† For the last fifteen years of my life I have been endeavouring to attain a thorough knowledge of the human heart : and I am firmly of opinion, that men, in general, are great rascals.

Women are more generous, and far more noble-minded.

“ I can no more—my heart is riv’n—
Thou’rt welcome to me, Death !”
Then casting up her eyes to heav’n,
She vented her last breath !

ON THE QUEEN,

DURING HER TRIAL.

When, Gracious Caroline, wilt thou be free
From all the poisonous shafts of calumny ?
Were not the sorrows of thy widow’d bed
Enough ? Must other storms hang o’er thy head ;
Forbid it, Heav’n—thy wonted succour lend—
Avert the danger—and her cause befriend ;
O could but Charlotte from the tomb arise *,
Her piteous tears would drown the nation’s cries ;
What grief, alas ! when she to Heav’n resign’d
Th’ exalted virtues which adorn’d her mind.

* The Queen’s daughter, who was cut off from the thread of life, in the very bloom of youth.

To see fair Caroline with all her might,
Asserting claims to Sov'reign regal right ;
Nay, to behold her comfortless, forlorn,
Exposed to every infamy and scorn ;
What man who boasts one drop of British blood,
But willingly wou'd shed it for her good?

Gods ! shall we not our sacred laws revere ?
Was it not proved that guilt did not appear * ?
Her matchless magnanimity of mind ;
Has beam'd fresh honour o'er her sex's kind.

May Heav'n look down with a benignant smile,
On one whose tongue was ever void of guile :
And when the secrets of all hearts are known,
Angels conduct her to a Heav'nly throne !

* As a lover of justice and detester of tyranny, I espoused her Majesty's cause ; and I beg, as a plain humble man, that I may be permitted to ask, whether a subject of the realm, who has been acquitted, or received an equivalent, is not by the law of the land deemed innocent ?

ON

THE QUEEN'S

LATE INDISPOSITION AND RECOVERY.

When the loud trump convey'd the news by sound,
A gloomy cast o'erspread the Heav'ns around ;
Darkness came o'er the spirits of the deep,
And Nature's self seem'd wrapt in sorrow's sleep.

But gracious Heav'n decrees his blessing now,
And rosy health fresh blooms upon her brow ;
May she enjoy a tranquil peace of mind,
For in affliction she has been resign'd.
And when this mortal life draws to a close,
May her asylum be sweet Heav'n's repose !

ON READING THAT THE BILL OF PAINS AND PENALTIES, LATELY PENDING AGAINST HER MAJESTY, HAD BEEN WITHDRAWN.

Rejoice, ye Britons ! and, of fear devoid,
Strike loud the harp, and let the trump applaud ;
Swell, swell your vocal notes, beat doubling drums,
For lo ! Britannia's Queen in triumph comes.

Pure as the lily, or the damask-rose,
Her virtue triumphs o'er her deadly foes ;
Act then as Britons ; shew that genial worth
Which freeborn sons inherit from their birth ;
Around her brows plant honorary bays,
And crown her with fair England's sov'reign praise.

THE
MAN OF BLOOD *,

A SATIRE.

Oh! where's this arrant, this consummate knave,
Who for no mercy looks beyond the grave †!
Methinks I see him stretch'd on his death-bed,
And choirs of demons hov'ring o'er his head;
Who anxious wait till the last gasp of breath,
Consigns him to the hungry jaws of death.

* When in the West Indies, I wrote this satire on an officer (since dead) of high rank in the army, in consequence of his having ordered a girl about eighteen (for little or no crime) to be severely flogged. I made my inquiries relating the circumstance, and all I could learn from his other slaves was---“Massa bad man---Massa flog too much---Massa no good.” This fellow was not content with having one driver (the man whose office it is to flog these forlorn creatures) but he must have two; that is, one to relieve the other. He also had three stakes planted in the ground, in the form of a cross, to which her arms and legs were extended and tied. After the flogging (horrible to relate!) he ordered one of his other servants to rub her with vinegar and pepper. The poor helpless, and, I may add, innocent slave, died in less than two days.

† Next to the satisfaction I receive in the prosperity of an honest man, I am best pleased with the confusion of a rascal.

Tremble, thou wretch, thou first of guilty men !
Not all thy pow'r can brave the Critic's pen *.
E'en Kings and Queens, the fearful and the brave,
Have felt the stroke which poignant satire gave,
And thinkst thou then, because so mighty grown,
Thou sitt'st secure upon thy martial throne ?
Believe it not—for the stern sat'rist's pen
Respects the great no more than humble men :
All who offend against the laws of GOD,
Shall feel the smart of honest satire's rod.
Cease then, vain man, thy former life review,
And what you wou'd expect from others—do :
Renounce thy guilt, and learn from me to know
That earthly joys must from pure virtue flow ;
Remember—lest to swift damnation hurl'd—
“ There is another and a better world.”

* “ I tell thee, wretch, search all creation round,
In earth, in Heav'n, no subject can be found
(Our God alone except) above whose weight,
The poet cannot rise and hold his state.”

TO
MISS P——

MARY, awake, and let thy soul
Breathe out her tender strains,
For friendship's zeal without controul,
Beats high within my veins.

Oh, thee, who boasts surpassing worth,
And art supremely fair,
To wish the greatest good on earth
Hath ever been my care.

Be sure that in good fortune's reign
Thoul't always have a friend * ;
But shou'd affliction change the scene,
Then friendship's at an end.

* In prosperity we are surrounded by a host of friends ; but should we by any unexpected calamity be reduced to penury, our friends (who before grew upon our smiles) shun us as they would a wild beast. FORDYCE gives a beautiful description of a true friend, viz. :---Concerning the man you call your friend, tell me, will he weep with you in the hour of your distress ? If misfortunes and losses should oblige you to retire into a walk of life in which you cannot appear with the same liberality as formerly, will he still think himself happy in your society, and, instead of gradually with-

But when affliction presses hard,
In each a friend we'll find ;
Grief can't diminish thy regard,
Nor render me less kind.

When life is drawing to a close
I'll drop affection's tear ;
I'll mourn that death should interpose
'Tween friendship so sincere.

And should it please th' Almighty Pow'r
That thou should'st first depart,
I o'er thy silent grave will pour
The sorrows of my heart !

drawing himself from an unprofitable connexion, take pleasure in professing himself your friend, and cheerfully assist you to support the burden of your afflictions? When sickness shall call you to retire from the gay and busy scenes of the world, will he follow you into your gloomy retreat, listen with attention to your "tale of symptoms," and minister the balm of consolation to your fainting spirit? And, lastly, when death shall burst asunder every earthly tie, will he shed a tear upon your grave, and lodge the dear remembrance of your mutual friendship in his heart as a treasure never to be resigned? The man who will not do all this, may be your companion, but, believe me, he is not your friend."

THE
BEAUTY OF BRIGHTON.

A COMIC SONG,

WRITTEN EXPRESSLY FOR THE STAGE.

You must know, my good people, that in Brighton
town,

A lady once lived of great fame and renown ;
She had coral lips, and a beautiful face,
And was not deficient in manner and grace.

She had not only beauty but something else too,
Which, if you'll permit me, I'll now show to you,
(*Holding up and shaking a purse of guineas*)

It is evident then, not in beauty alone,
But in what is better this dear angel shone.

Oh, all the gay sparks went now hunting about
In hopes, by good fortune, they'd find the fair out,
And while one look'd here, and another look'd there,
I vow, my good people, they search'd everywhere.

Twas thought by the blades now a heavenly treat,
If they were so lucky this fair one to meet;
And whether it rain'd, hail'd, thunder'd, or blow'd,
Themselves at the Steyne every evening they show'd.

But some how or other she seldom was there,
She had no inclination to taste the fresh air;
And when that she did, thro' a veil that she wore,
They saw, to be sure—but they wish'd to see more.

There was a young fellow more sharp than the rest,
Who said to himself, I will now do my best;
So he went twice a-day to church every Sunday,
Tho' he every Sunday had treated like Monday.

It was in this manner the courtship began,
And many there were who now envied the man;
Because, as I told you, 'twas not beauty alone,
But in what is better this dear angel shone.

*(The Singer here leaves the stage, as if the song
was finished; but instantly returns, and
commences the other verse.)*

I forgot, Sirs, to mention, she'd a virtuous mind,
As chaste as Diana, and yet very kind,
Was blest with a beautiful progeny too,
And may the same blessing attend all of you!

A

SKETCH OF MANKIND*.

WRITTEN BEFORE THE AUTHOR LEFT SCHOOL.

“ By him that made me, I am much more proud,
More inly satisfied to have a crowd
Point at me as I pass, and cry—‘ That’s he,
A poor but honest man, who dares be free

* The circumstance which gave rise to this poem, is as follows : On a fine day one of the boys and myself played the truant, and must needs go a bird-nesting. We had not proceeded far before we espied a rook’s nest ; and, as the tree was very high, we went (as was always the case in a hazardous enterprize) odd and even, who should ascend, and unfortunately it fell to my lot. Up I went, but had scarcely got half way, when down I came, and so bruised my knee that I was totally unable to walk, which caused great uneasiness to my companion, not on account of my fall, but lest it should lead to his discovery : so off he set and left me to get home the best way I could. Placed in this awkward predicament, I lay in the field for upwards of an hour ; till at last two ploughmen happened to come by and carried me home.

When I was nearly well, my master one morning came into my bed-room, and said, “ I shall remember you, young gentleman, for playing the truant, when you come down to school.” And as he was generally as good as his word, I immediately began to hit upon

Amidst corruption'—than to have a train
Of flatt'ring levee slaves to make me vain
Of things I ought to blush for ; to run, fly,
And live but in the motion of my eye ;
When I am less than man, my faults t'adore,
And make me think that I am something more."

CHURCHILL.

HAPPY the man, who, on the world's great stage,
Walks uncorrupted in this sinful age—
Pursues the track which his forefathers trod,
True to his king, his country, and his God :
Who envies not the splendour of the great,
But is contented in a low estate* :
His house well known to all the neighb'ring poor,
Proud to relieve the wretched at his door ;

a plan how to escape punishment. First, I thought I would once more try the effect of a satire. Then, on the other hand, I reflected, that if I should be found out, the former lines would immediately be laid to my charge, and consequently should be paid off for one and all : so in lieu of this, I thought I would write a poem, which might so please him that he would forgive the punishment. My knee, I knew, would keep me to my bed-room for three or four weeks ; and in the event of the poem not being finished, I thought I could sham sick for a little time. Accordingly I set about it, and contrived to put it on his desk the very morning I came down to school. It had the desired effect, and the old gentleman was very good to me ever after.

* " A contented mind and a good conscience will make a man happy in all conditions."

Free from the cares of a rude bustling life,
Supremely blest with a kind-hearted wife :
Of income clear—five hundred pounds will do ;
What need man more when nature's wants are few * ?
A small neat cottage—some few miles from town,
Where stages pass that take folks up and down.
Oh, this is happiness, yet few, we find,
Possess'd of such an humble turn of mind ;
For now the world adopts a different plan,
The love of lucre sways the mind of man † ;
To this vile passion every thing gives place,
And vice is held no longer a disgrace.
Of beasts and birds, of every thing that moves,
Still man the worst and the most dangerous proves.

* Nature's wants are without opulence supplied.

† The late Mrs. Barbauld has made some excellent remarks on this head, namely, " But is it not some reproach upon the economy of Providence, that such a one, who is a mean, dirty, illiterate fellow, who cannot construe the motto of the arms on his coach, should have amassed wealth enough to buy half a nation ? Not in the least. He made himself a mean dirty fellow for that end. He has paid his health, his liberty, his conscience for it. And will you envy him his bargain ? But (says the man of letters,) what reward have I then for all my labours ? What reward ? A large comprehensive mind, well purged from vulgar fears, and perturbations, and prejudices, able to comprehend and interpret the works of man—of God. A rich, flourishing, cultivated mind, pregnant with inexhaustible stores of entertainment and reflection. A perpetual spring of fresh ideas ; and the conscious dignity of superior intelligence. Good heaven ! And what reward can you ask besides ? "

Behold the lion (and what beast so mild)
The chief of all that range the forest wild ;
He, far remote from all the haunts of men,
Enjoys contentment in the cavern'd den ;
Nor does he (if tradition tell aright)
E'er kill, but to allay his appetite.
Not so with man—who, terrible to say—
Oft murders for revenge or sordid pay.
His Maker's image he presumes t' efface,
And, in himself, that image to disgrace.
But is this all ? No—other sins abound,
And vice in every corner may be found.
Th' adulterer, who plays a villain's part,
Smiles in your face and stabs you to the heart.
Perish the base *Lothario*, whose great joy
Is matrimonial comfort to destroy :
Who, in a country, civilized and nice,
Has made *crim. con.* a fashionable vice !
Perish the slanderer, who dares defame
And from his neighbour pillage a good name !
Perish the woman-hater, who rejects
The lovely help-mate Providence directs ;
For woman—charming woman—was design'd
To be the pride and glory of mankind*.
Oh, whither can we fly, when most distress'd,
But to a shelter in the fair one's breast ?

* Without the fair sex the world would be a wilderness.

Search every country—all creation round,
Woman's the greatest blessing to be found ;
Then think not man thou art the chief on earth,
For 'tis to woman that you owe your birth.

How bold the man who on this world's great stage,
Lashes the vices of this sinful age !

He must be certain as the world now goes,
Instead of friends he gains a host of foes.

Do you of this the reason wish to know ?

It is because that every rogue's his foe *.

Look round the world, and for one honest man †

How many hundreds choose a different plan !

The scripture says that we are born in sin—

'Tho' fair without, that we are black within.

Trust not to outward show, for 'tis well known

'That many a parson has disgrac'd his gown.

Not only parsons—others too, I ween,

Will wear religion's garb, their vice to screen—

* The man who acts a real, honest, upright part, is he “ who will faithfully reprove you to your face, for actions for which others are ridiculing or censuring you behind your back.” But a man of this stamp will always have many enemies, because few people like to be told of their errors.

† It is equally as hard to find a truly honest man, as it is a true friend.

Will visit church on Sunday—kneel and pray—
Yet slander and defraud you the next day*.

Vile are all those, who for mere paltry gold,
Will wed their daughters to some dotards old †;
This is a traffic, infamous indeed,
Which must to strife and bitter anguish lead.
Love now has grown entirely out of date,
’Tis seldom found, I fear, among the great.
This is the reason, often in high life,
Of separations between man and wife.
Marriage, in days of yore, was much rever’d;
The king and beggar equally it cheer’d:

* There are many who make an ostentatious display of religion, and often pass with the credulous for worthy characters, when if their conduct was narrowly looked into, it would be found a mere cloak for their sins.

“ Their silken smiles, their hypocritic air;
Their meek demeanor, plausible and fair,
Are only worn to pave fraud’s easier way,
And make gull’d virtue fall a surer prey.”

† It is no unusual thing to see parents wed their daughters to old men of fortune; but surely such matches, instead of encreasing, can only tend to diminish that harmony and peace, which is the sole basis of conjugal happiness. PRIESTLEY’S Considerations for the use of young men, are well worth the attention of those who intend entering the marriage state. “ The only objection,” he says, “ that ought to be made to a man’s marrying to what is called beneath himself, respects education and manners, and not fortune.”

For mutual love they married, and, of course,
There was no separation or divorce.
But now-a-days it is a sort of trade ;
They say of a fine girl her fortune's made.
Some men imagine that a pretty wife
Insures consummate happiness in life :
Provided she's as blooming as the rose,
That's quite sufficient as the world now goes.
But beauty cannot long retain its charms,
It quickly fades within a husband's arms ;
And they who marry for a *face*, will find
It little signifies without a *mind* ;
For sense and beauty seldom are combin'd.

How often parents 'gainst their children's will
Place them in offices they cannot fill.
One says, " My boy shall wear a scarlet coat,"
Thinking, no doubt, he'll be a man of note :
Although the youngster evidently needs
That martial spirit which to honour leads.
Another lad may to the law be bred :
Who'll put a wig upon an empty head.
One for the church his parents may design,
Although too profligate for a divine.
Another for a doctor, tho' he lack
Sufficient brains for mountebank or quack.

What is a title ? a mere empty name *,
'Tho' oft the passport thro' the paths of shame,
And yet (how strange !) oft titles are bestow'd
On men who never any merit show'd :
Nay more, they're oft assum'd for sake of pride,
Or, what's still worse, some treachery to hide.
It is not all in an exalted station
Who are entitled to our commendation ;
For any fool may noble blood inherit ;
But what of that ? True nobleness is merit.
A nobleman committeth without blame
What oft would bring a commoner to shame †,
When a great nobleman is named, I choose
The man and not the title to peruse ‡.

* There are three things which mark the distinction between one man and another. The first principal one is—the rectitude of our conduct. The second—the endowments of the mind. Lastly, fortune and rank. “ Nobility is to be considered only as an imaginary distinction, unless accompanied with the practice of those generous virtues, by which it ought to be obtained. Titles of honour conferred upon such as have no personal merit, are at best but the royal stamp set upon base metal.

† “ When a rich man speaketh, every man holdeth his tongue, and look, what he saith, they extol it to the clouds ; but if a poor man speak, they say, what fellow is this ?”

‡ Though an honourable title may be conveyed to posterity, yet the ennobling qualities, which are the soul of greatness, are a sort of incommunicable perfections, and cannot be transferred.

Let those who like, look up to pedigree,

'Tis virtue only that has weight with me.

A title often proves for vice a screen—

“ My Lord's above't ”—“ His Grace can't be so
“ mean * ”

While a plain Mister oft encounters blame,

For bare suspicion tends to brand his name.

My boyish lays to some may give offence,

Tho' void of grace, I hope not void of sense † ;

No pow'r on earth my thoughts shall e'er control,

Nor shake the independence of my soul :

As servile flattery I cannot bear,

With honest freedom I'll my mind declare ;

If a man could bequeath his virtues by will, and settle his sense and learning upon his heirs, as certainly as he can his lands, a noble descent would then indeed be a very valuable privilege.”

* “ Who shall go about to cozen fortune, and be honorable without the stamp of merit? Let none presume to wear an undeserved dignity. Oh that estates, degrees, and offices, were not derived corruptedly ; that clear honor were purchased by the merit of the wearer ! How many then should cover that stand bare ! How many be commanded that command ! ”

† “ The chief advantage that ancient writers can boast over modern ones, seems owing to simplicity. Every noble truth and sentiment was expressed by the former in a natural manner : in word and phrase simple, perspicuous, and incapable of improvement. What then remained for later writers but affectation, witticism, and conceit ? ”

Yes, spite of hell, I'll always vice oppose*,
 Tho' at th' expense of a whole host of foes †.
 The muse, for motives just, holds up to view
 A picture of mankind, in colours true;
 She gives to Virtue, what is virtue's due,
 Lashing the vices of the sneaking crew,
 Who, to gain favour, care not what they do.
 And these, of which each day affords a test,
 Do—wonderful to tell—succeed the best ‡.
 Well practis'd in dissimulation's guile,
 They cringe, and fawn, and wound you while they
 smile :

* “ The blessed saints above in numbers speak
 The praise of God, tho' there all praise is weak ;
 In numbers here below the bard shall teach
 Virtue to soar beyond the villain's reach.”

“ As to be perfectly just is an attribute of the divine nature,
 to be so to the utmost of our abilities, is the glory of man.”

† “ Unawed by numbers, follow nature's plan,
 Assert the rights, or quit the name of man ;
 Consider well, weigh strictly right and wrong ;
 Resolve not quick, but once resolv'd, be strong :
 In spite of dulness, and in spite of wit,
 If to thyself thou canst thyself acquit ;
 Rather stand up assur'd with conscious pride
 Alone, than err with millions on thy side.”

‡ Bare merit does not always succeed. The celebrated PHILETAS once said to the no less celebrated ALCIBIADES, “ I am sure you are a man of merit, because you have been so often put by preferment.”

They act the spaniel's part, whereby they're sure
To get a place, perhaps a sinecure :
But he who follows this deceitful plan,
Is undeserving of the name of man :
Tho' to preferment sycophants may rise,
They are what honest men must sure despise.

Some men in pow'r are fond of flattery's ways,—
The compliments which adulation pays *.
And, so delighted with the bended knee,
The narrow-minded sycophant may be
Assured of filling the next vacancy.

Others again—if the muse judge aright—
Look on these men in a much different light,
Who'll give to merit what is merit's due,
And scorn the flatt'ry of the smooth-faced crew ;
Well knowing that of flatt'ry the intent
Is to obtain some great emolument—
Instinct directs me to appeal to those ;
For such will be my friends, and not my foes ;
And were it not for such impartial men
Success could ne'er attend the poet's pen.
Indeed some poets prostitute their lays
By dedicating them to undue praise,

* “ The coin that is most current among mankind is flattery.”

Making the wicked good—the proud more vain,
In hopes some great emolument to gain.
Thank Heav'n, I'm quite a novice in the art,
And scorn the bard that acts this double part.
It seems, that the great secret of their pen
Consists in flattering all kinds of men ;
They will ascribe to merit all its due ;
But what of that ? for they'll praise blockheads too.
They'll praise all men alike, and ev'n the fair
Of adulation have an equal share.
Love-sonnets they'll occasionally write,
And tales, to suit their purposes, recite.
In morning visits, when chit-chat abounds,
What idle rhapsodies—what empty sounds !
For want of other prattle, they may say,
“ Oh, ma'am, you look quite beautiful to-day,
“ Fresh as the primrose in the month of May *.”
So fine they write—so well they play their cards,
They'd be ashamed to know their brother bards.
By flattery, and by a pack of lies,
To competence these poetasters rise.
But simple facts, which strike us to the heart,
Are better far than flatt'ry's silk-spun art :
There is a pride in knowing what we write
Is dictated by conscience, which speaks right.

* A sweet flower that appears early : it generally blooms in May.

When praising virtue where no virtue reigns,
It may be said indeed—*the poet feigns*.
Such praise to deal out shows no little wit ;
And 'tis the point which many wish to hit :
Some use perhaps finessing as a prop ;
It may be so—if they know when to stop :
But like the poacher trapping a poor hare,
They're often justly caught in their own snare ;
And thus it is—because in lieu of praise
Contempt is all they meet with for their lays.
But tho' so many thus themselves disgrace,
Thank Heav'n, with all our bards 'tis not the case.
The meritorious do not want our praise,
For on themselves they an encomium raise.
If this a paradox you should believe,
From witty CONGREVE these four lines I'll give :—
“ Myself I praise, while I thy praise intend,
“ For 'tis some virtue, virtue to commend ;
“ And next to deeds, which our own honor raise,
“ Is to distinguish them who merit praise.”
’Tis said, “ in truth lies all that is sublime,
“ Whether we write in prose, blank verse, or rhyme.”
Whot hen ,provided the bare fact appear,
Can justly say my lines are too severe ?
Some fool, no doubt, will always be at hand *,
To censure what they cannot understand ;

* “ Superior virtue, and superior sense,
“ To knaves and fools will always give offence.”

And most indubitably, when they see
Their own vile character drawn to a T*.

* There were about one hundred and twenty more lines, which comprised the encomiastic part of the Poem, but which have been lost for some time.

THE END.

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